

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 PM-05

SP-02 SS-15 L-03 H-01 PA-01 CAB-02 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5256

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15734

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, IT

SUBJECT: GOI THREAT TO PAN AM FLIGHTS BEYOND ROME

REF: (A) WHITING/STYLES TELECON OF 8/25/78N (B) ROME 15702,

1. FOLLOWING LINE OF REF (A) GUIDANCE EMBOFF INFORMED PIETROSANTO (MFA) EVENING OF AUG 25 THAT EMBOFF AUTHORIZED TO MEET WITH DGCA COLLINI AND PIETROSANTO TO LISTEN TO VIEWS AND PROPOSALS BUT WOULD BE UNABLE TO MAKE SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSE UNTIL SUCH TIME AS MFA RESPONDS SUBSTANTIVELY TO LAST THREE EMBASSY NOTES AND AIDE MEMOIRE OF AUG 9. EMBOFF ALSO SAID THAT ALTHOUGH HE COULD PARTICIPATE IN SUCH A MEETING WITH PAN AM REP IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE IN ADJOINING ROOM FOR SEPARATE SIDE CONSULTATION, HE COULD NOT PARTICIPATE IF PAN AM AND ALITALIA REPS BOTH PRESENT IN ADJOINING ROOM DUE TO U.S. ANTI-TRUST LAW CONSIDERATIONS.

2. PIETROSANTO SAID IT WOULD BE USELESS TO HOLD SUCH A MEETING AS ITS PURPOSE WAS TO FIND SOLUTION TO PRESENT IMPASSE. U.S. STANCE MEANT THAT IT WAS HOLDING TO ITS POSITION. HE INDICATED THAT, UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, ITALIAN REPLY TO U.S. NOTES AND AIDE MEMOIRE WOULD BE RESTATEMENT OF ITALIAN POSITION. HE SAID PURPOSE OF HAVING PAN AM AND ALITALIA REPS AVAILABLE FOR CONSULTATION WAS TO PERMIT EXPLORATION OF PASSENGER DATA
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ESPECIALLY IN REGARD TO EMBOFF'S STATEMENTS DURING MEETING WITH MONDELLO (SEE REF B) TO EFFECT THAT EMBOFF DOUBTED PAN AM BEYOND ROME OPERATIONS AFFECTING ANY INJURY ON ALITALIA AND THAT ALITALIA WOULD BE ABLE HANDLE PAN AM PASSENGERS SHOULD ITALIAN AUTHORITIES PUT A SUDDEN HALT TO PAN AM TAKE-OFFS EAST OF ROME.

3.EMBOFF SAID HE WOULD REPORT PIETROSANTO'S EXPLANATION OF PURPOSE OF MEETING, BUT REPEATED THAT FOR NOW EMBOFF WAS AUTHORIZED TO PARTICIPATE ONLY ON BASIS PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED AT LEAST UNTIL MFA HAD REPLIED TO U.S. NOTES AND AIDE MEMOIRE.

4. EMBOFF RELATED FOREGOING TO PAN AM MANAGER IMMEDIATELY AFTER CONVERSATION WITH PIETROSANTO AND CAUTIONED PAN AM MANAGER THAT HE MIGHT BE ASKED BY CIVILAVIA OR ALITALIA DIRECTLY TO DISCUSS PASSENGER DATA. PAN AM MANAGER SAID HE WOULD NOT RELEASE OR DISCUSS ANY DATA WITHOUT PAN AM HEADQUARTERS APPROVAL. HE AGAIN STATED THAT ALITALIA WOULD ABSORB PAN AM PASSENGERS THAT WOULD BE STRANDED WERE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES TO SUDDENLY END PAN AM FLIGHTS.

5. COMMENT. EMBASSY BELIEVES IT GAINED AN EDGE DURING DISCUSSION OF NOTE 517 WHICH IT IS RELUCTANT TO PUT AT RISK IN ANOTHER ENCOUNTER WITH CIVILAVIA. (SEE REF B). AMBASSADOR MONDELLO SEEMED SURPRISINGLY ILL-PREPARED FOR THAT MEETING. EMBASSY IS ALSO IN COMPLETE ACCORD WITH CURRENT USG POSTURE OF SEEKING SUBSTANTIVE FORMAL REPLY TO OUR FORMAL APPROACHES. NEVERTHELESS, OUR REFUSAL TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS OSTENSIBLY FOR PURPOSE OF FINDING SOLUTION TO CURRENT IMPASSE COULD STRENGTHEN HAND OF HARDLINERS IN GOI. ALTHOUGH GOI HAS FRITTERED AWAY SOME STRONG POINTS OF ITS POSITION, SOME STRENGTHS REMAIN. CONFIDENTIAL

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FOR EXAMPLE, EMBASSY BELIEVES IT IS IN WEAK POSITION WHEN DISCUSSION IS DRAGGED BACK BEYOND MFA APRIL 4 NOTE TO PROS AND CONS OF WHETHER SCHEDULES FILED IN 1977 OR SCHEDULED OPERATED THAT YEAR SHOULD BE BASIS FOR FREEZE. WE NOTE ALSO BELIEF ON GOI SIDE THAT U.S. CANNOT JUSTIFIABLY TAKE COMPENSATORY ACTION, SHOULD U.S. BEYOND ROME FLIGHTS BE RESTRICTED, AS ITALY DOES NOT HAVE BEYOND U.S. FLIGHTS. HOLMES

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